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ABSTRACT

During the late 1960's people of the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation (a South Dakota area the size of Connecticut characterized by poverty, poor soil, aridity, and geographical isolation) began to consider establishment of an institution of higher education on the reservation. A consensus soon developed that a tribally-controlled community college would be the best institution for consolidating new opportunities available under federal funding and for ensuring residents that they would earn transferable academic credit for the work they completed. While other reservations established tribally-controlled centers or colleges, supporters of a community college for Cheyenne River were not idle. The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council approved a charter for the Cheyenne River Community College (CRCC) in 1973, and CRCC soon became a member of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium. Acquisition of funding was a serious problem, but a schedule was organized for the 1975 fall semester and the complex task began of consolidating available piecemeal course offerings into a coherent curriculum. CRCC moved to new quarters during January, 1980. Fall 1980 saw implementation of joint programs with Presentation College (nursing) and Black Hills State College (teacher training). Enrollment grew from 184 students in 1975 to more than 200 in 1978. (BRR)

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Visitors to the Administrative Offices of the Cheyenne River Community College in Eagle Butte, South Dakota, are welcomed by an attractive sign decorated with traditional Lakota symbols and the motto, "The 4 W's." The sign explains that the four W's are "woonspe (learning), wowiyukcan (thought), woslolye (knowledge) and woksape (wisdom)."[1] The phrase is as well-known among the Lakota as the "three R's" would be among non-Indians. The "four W's" reflect the priorities of the College and the community it serves, the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation.

Eagle Butte is located in the approximate center of the reservation. The Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation itself is situated in the northwestern quarter of South Dakota about halfway between Rapid City, one-hundred-and-seventy-two miles to the west, and Aberdeen, one-hundred-and-seventy miles to the east.[2] Pierre, the state capital, is ninety-three miles southeast of Eagle Butte where the offices of the Cheyenne Agency and the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council have been located since 1959.[3]

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[1]Sign on the front door of the Cheyenne River Community College, Eagle Butte, South Dakota. It should be noted that this phrase is not an official motto of the College. The sign was drawn by Sidney Keith, a local artist, and a member of the CRCC faculty.

[2]The distances mentioned refer to one-way travel. See "Mileage Chart," Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Aberdeen Area Office, Aberdeen, South Dakota, October 18, 1963. This guide is in general use throughout the Area.

[3]A good description of this move can be found in Fred, Masek, "Paradise on the Prairie Takes Shape in S.D.," Reprinted from the Sioux Falls /South Dakota/ Argus Leader by the Eagle Butte /South Dakota/ News for its "Golden Jubilee Edition" of July 15-17, 1960, unpaged.

With a land area of 2,804,090 acres,[4] the reservation is approximately the same size as the state of Connecticut and it includes both Dewey and Ziebach Counties.[5] None of the twenty-seven communities on the reservation were served by public transportation until funding for a small mini-bus system was approved early in March, 1982. Many communities on the reservation lack paved roads, modern utilities, and dependable telephone service. The nearest commercial airport is located almost one-hundred miles away in Pierre.[6]

The land itself places significant limitations on the development of the reservation. Although well-suited for grazing, the soil is alkaline and the climate is dry which makes profitable agriculture difficult. Compounding these difficulties are dramatic fluctuations in temperature from highs of one-hundred-and-ten degrees Fahrenheit in the summer

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[4] Bradey Consultants, Inc., Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation (3 vols.; Spearfish, South Dakota, 1973), vol. I, p. 5.

[5] No up-to-date histories of the reservation or the counties are available. A good history of the Cheyenne Agency during the late nineteenth century is Harry H. Anderson, "A History of the Cheyenne River Indian Agency And Its Military Post, Fort Bennett, 1868-1891," Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of South Dakota, 1954. Lee Montelle Creamer, "A History Of Ziebach County, To 1936," Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of South Dakota, 1937, is is good for the early history of that county. It should be supplemented by the "Golden Jubilee Edition" of the Eagle Butte News which provides a substantial amount of information on Ziebach County as well as the southern portion of Dewey County including what used to be Armstrong County. The Golden Jubilee: 1910-1960 - Timber Lake, South Dakota (n.p., n.d.,), is a good source of information on the eastern portion of the reservation and the northern portion of Dewey County.

[6] Bradey Consultants, Inc., Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, vol. I, p. 12.

to lows of eighty degrees below zero in the winter when the wind-chill factor is considered.[7]

Nearly 7,400 people reside on the reservation. Of these, about 4,560 are enrolled members of either the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe or some other federally-recognized tribe of Indians. The remaining residents are predominantly white and comprise about thirty-eight percent of the total population.[8] It is significant that the total population of the reservation has declined by nearly forty percent since 1930 compared to a decline of about four percent for the state as a whole during the same period.[9]

More than fifty percent of all Indian families in South Dakota are below the poverty level.[10] These percentages are thought to be higher on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation due to its combination of poor soil, aridity, and geographical isolation.[11] In view of the urgent problems facing the people it is remarkable that they uniformly assign a very high priority

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[7] Ibid., vol. I, pp. 12-13.

[8] Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Economic Development Branch, Eagle Butte, South Dakota, Unpublished Analysis, April 25, 1975.

[9] Bradey Consultants, Inc., Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, vol. I, pp. 174-175. The period described is the period from 1930 to 1970.

[10] Mary Ellen McEldowney, Where We're At: Statistical Report on the Status of Minorities and Women in South Dakota (Pierre, South Dakota: Division of Human Rights, Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Agust 20, 1973), p. 42.

[11] Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Community Health Representatives, Cheyenne River Sioux Indian Reservation (Eagle Butte, South Dakota, June, 1972), pp. 14-15.

to education, especially post-secondary education.[12]

During the late 1960's, the people of the reservation began to consider the establishment of an institution of higher education on the reservation to be a realistic objective as well as a desirable one. The many, new programs sponsored by the federal government under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations provided an expanded array of training and educational opportunities. By 1968, ad hoc groups were exploring the possibility of securing academic credit at the secondary and post-secondary level for many for many of these diverse programs. A consensus soon developed that a tribally-controlled community college would be the best institution for consolidating these new opportunities and ensuring residents that they could earn transferable academic credit for the work they completed.[13] The establishment of Rough Rock Demonstration

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[12]This is the conclusion reached in every authoritative survey consulted. The most significant of these are: Ellsworth Albert LeBeau, "A Survey To Determine The Motivational Factors Affecting American Indian Students Who Have Attended Cheyenne River Community College," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of South Dakota, 1979; Robert E. Kaffer and David R. Holmes, "Northern State College HEA Title III Project Evaluation Report 1978-1979," Unpublished Report to Cheyenne River Community College, August, 1979; Native American Research Associates, "Survey And Report On Tribally Controlled Community Colleges For The Cheyenne River Community College, Eagle Butte, South Dakota," Unpublished Survey for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Albuquerque, New Mexico, January 19, 1979, especially pp. 1-3; and the individual residents of the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation quoted in Herbert Hoover, ed., Community Response to Educational Institutions on the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation (Brookings, South Dakota, 1975).

[13]Letter, Ellsworth A. LeBeau to David Gipp, February 27, 1976, Cheyenne River Community College, Outgoing Correspondence File, Eagle Butte, South Dakota.

School in 1966 and Navajo Community College in 1969 provided models of educational institutions operating under tribal control rather than under the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the state.[14]

Funding for an institution of higher education was not available locally. The Bureau of Indian Affairs had begun allocating funds for postsecondary education as early as 1947 when $9,390 was committed to assist about fifty Indian students. By 1967, this figure had grown to $1,913,320 to assist more than 2,300 Indian students.[15] Federal policy during the 1960's, however, was relocate Indians to urban communities which were often long distances from the reservations. Consequently, virtually all of those selected to receive educational assistance from the Bureau were compelled to leave their homes on the reservations. Many Indians condemned this of the serious problems it caused for families and the unnecessary expenses it incurred for the Bureau all without producing any

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[14]Margaret Connell Szasz, Education And The American Indian: The Road To Self-Determination Since 1928 (Albuquerque, 1977), p. 155. Szasz provides an excellent, general survey of Indian education. Also helpful is her article, "Federal Boarding Schools and the Indian Child: 1920-1960," South Dakota History, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Fall, 1977), pp. 371-384. An authoritative guide to Sioux education is provided in Bibliography Of The Sioux by Jack W. Marken and Herbert T. Hoover (Metuchen, New Jersey, 1980), pp. 56-62.

[15]U.S. Congress, House, Oversight Hearings On Indian Education, statement by Patricia A. Lock, President of the National Indian Education Association, before a subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor, 95th Cong., 1st. sess., 1977, p. 564.

significant benefits. The program appeared to be an expensive failure and it contributed nothing to the development of reservation communities.[16]

Some courses were being offered for academic credit to reservation residents on an extension basis, but these courses were available only on a limited basis and it was not possible for those taking them to earn any kind of postsecondary degree without spending at least a semester or two on a distant campus. The closest institution of higher education was Black Hills State College located one-hundred-and-fifty-five miles west of Eagle Butte. Aberdeen, located one-hundred-and-seventy miles east of Eagle Butte, was the location of a second state institution, Northern State College, and a private school of nursing, Presentation College. All three institutions had offered some courses on an extension basis. Even the University of South Dakota located three-hundred-and-fifty-nine miles southwest of Eagle Butte in Vermillion had offered some extension coursework intended to benefit police officers and other members of the legal system serving the reservation.[17]

Scheduling such courses was an extremely difficult process. The long distances involved made it extremely expensive to send instructors to the reservation on a regular

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[16] Ibid., pp. 572-573. The conclusions are Patricia Locke's, but they exemplify generally held opinions.

[17] "Mileage Chart," B.I.A., October 18, 1963. As noted previously, the distances are for one-way travel.

basis. In most cases, a rigorous effort was made to locate qualified persons who already resided on the reservation to conduct the course. Although an astonishing array of talented people were available, virtually all of them were employed on a full-time basis by other programs and it was difficult to induce some of them to serve as adjunct instructors especially if any travel was involved. Even if they could be presuaded to conduct a particular course, other serious problems remained. A meeting time and place had to be agreed upon, credentials provided and reviewed, books and other materials located and adequate student interest demonstrated before the course could actually be initiated.[18]

In spite of the many difficulties, the drive to establish a tribally-controlled community college on the reservation continued to mount. Public Service Careers, a program funded by the Department of Labor to provide training and education for tribal employees, began to identify education as an urgently needed service. Under the direction of Arlene Marshall, a tribal member who was also active in many of the earlier efforts to establish a community college, P.S.C. committed funds to cover the costs of tuition, books and instruction. Administrative support was also provided to assist in the complex process of scheduling. Although not limited to postsecondary education, many of P.S.C's one-

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[18] A review of the files maintained by C.R.C.C. on each instructor illustrates the immense effort devoted to such arrangements and the many difficulties encountered. Cheyenne River Community College, Administrative Records, Confidential Instructors' Files, Eagle Butte, South Dakota. The author was in charge of maintaining these records until the fall of 1981.

hundred-and-fifty trainees already had high school diplomas or graduate equivalency degrees.and therefore needed college-level courses. Head-Start, New Careers, Community Health Representatives and a number of other programs also played important roles in the early efforts to develop a community college on the reservation.[19]

The people of the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation were not alone in their desire to establish an institution of higher education to serve their reservations. A group under the leadership of Lionel Bordeaux incorporated Sinte Gleska College as a "non-profit educational organization" during the fall of 1970. In December of the same year, the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Council issued Sinte Gleska College a tribal charter as an institution of higher education. Agreements for accreditation of coursework were concluded with Black Hills State College and approved by the South Dakota Board of Regents permitting Sinte Gleska College to initiate classes in February, 1971.[20]

The Oglala Sioux Tribal Council issued a charter (Ordinance No. 71-01) to the Lakota higher Education Center for the same purpose late in 1970. It was not until 1972, however, that the South Dakota Board of Regents approved a cooperative

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[19]Public Service Careers Project, Directory Of Programs Sponsored By Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Eagle Butte, So. Dak. (Eagle Butte, South Dakota, January, 1973), p. 12.

[20]Sinte Gleska College, Rosebud, S.D.: History, Status, And Data (Rosebud, South Dakota, 1976), p. 1. It should be noted that the articles of incorporation mentioned here were were approved by the South Dakota Secretary of State rather than the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Council. Such incorporation facilitates efforts to secure tax exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service.

agreement between the Center and Black Hills State College making credits earned at the Center transferable to state institutions of higher education. The Center also provided secondary coursework leading to a graduate equivalency degree.[21]

Standing Rock Community College was formally organized on April 11, 1972, to serve the people of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. The institution did not receive funding under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965 until the summer of 1973 after an agreement had been concluded with Bismarck Junior College. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council issued a tribal charter to S.R.C.C. in September, 1973.[22]

The ad hoc supporters of a community college for Cheyenne River had not been idle. A draft for a tribal charter had been developed and submitted to the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council for its approval. In spite of the many distractions and pressures associated with that period,[23] the tribal council approved the charter on April 4, 1973, by a

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[21]U.S. Congress, Senate, Indian Postsecondary Assistance Act, Hearings, before a subcommittee of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Senate, on S. 2634, 94th Cong., 2nd sess., 1976, p. 379. The Center is now known as the Oglala Sioux Community College. Its catalog notes that the tribal charter was issued in 1971 which is consistent with the number assigned by the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council to the charter, (Ordinance No. 71-01). See Oglala Sioux Community College, Catalog - 1978-1979 (n.p.,n.d.), p.1.

[22]U.S. Congress, Senate, Indian Postsecondary Assistance Act, Hearings, p. 394.

[23]This was the period when militant supporters of the American Indian Movement occupied Wounded Knee, South Dakota. A.I.M. had been active in Eagle Butte during the summer of 1972 and even occupied the old, frame building north of the Telephone Authority Office on north Main Street briefly. The occupation ended peacefully after less than two hours without forceful intervention from uniform police. The building was a Legal Services office at the time. Later it was the site of C.R.C.C.

vote of fourteen to zero formally establishing what it called the "Cheyenne River Community College." It was charged with providing "a place where Sioux history and culture can be studied and learned" and with making "general education available to those who otherwise would be denied an opportunity to further their education or acquire employable skills."[24]

Although chartered too late to be among the six institutions which formed the American Indian Higher Education Consortium in 1972, C.R.C.C. became a member after A.I.H.E.C. initiated operations from Denver, Colorado, during October, 1973.[25] Thomas Atcitty, a former president of both A.I.H.E.C. and Navajo Community College, explained that A.I.H.E.C. was organized to serve "as a mechanism for self-improvement among the member institutions and as a means of strengthening our efforts in providing community-based education to our respective and diverse Tribal populations."[26]

The acquisition of an adequate funding base was a serious problem for C.R.C.C. With the examples of the A.I.H.E.C. institutions before, and with technical assistance and

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[24]The charter was passed as Resolution No. 94a-73-CR. C.R.C.C. Administrative Records, Charter; and C.R.S.T. Council Minutes, April 4, 1973.

[25]Perry G. Horse, Final Report: American Indian Higher Education Consortium Research Project To Strengthen Local Economic And Human Resource Development Through Indian Community Colleges In The Old West Region (Denver, Colorado, March, 1979), p.9. The six original institutions were: Hehaka Sapa College at D.Q. University; Navajo Community College; Lakota Higher Education Center; Sinte Gleska College; Standing Rock Community College and Turtle Mountain Community College.

[26]Atcitty is quoted in U.S. Congress, Senate, Indian Postsecondary Educational Assistance Act, Hearings, p. 160.

advice from A.I.H.E.C. and some of its member institutions, C.R.C.C.'s Board of Directors was able to form a consortium of its own with two off-reservation colleges (Northern State College and Presentation College) and secure limited funding under Title III of the Higher Education Act of 1965 which was designed to meet "America's critical need to assure that the benefits of a higher education be truly accessible to all" by providing support to "small, isolated colleges without adequate resources."[27]

During the complicated process of revising the proposal so that it would conform to the Title III guidelines for funding which prevailed at that time, Cheyenne River Community College came to be referred to as an "Extension Center"[28] in the proposal rather than the community college desired by the board and the tribal council. This label, or variations of it, were used for the following couple of years instead of the original name until action was taken by the board to clarify the situation by officially confirming the name used in the original tribal charter issued in 1973. The records suggest that a solid consensus had been reached by the board and the tribal council that the nascent institution should eventually

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[27]U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, Advisory Committee on Developing Institutions, Strengthening Developing Institutions: Title III Of The Higher Education Act of 1965 - Annual Report (Washington, D.C.: Department of Health, Education and Welfare, March, 1978), p.5. Because of earlier linkages between reservation training programs and the extension program at Black Hills State College, that institution had initially been approached by C.R.C.C. It was fully committed to Sinte Gleska and Oglala Sioux Community College by this time, however.

[28]This wording is from C.R.S.T. Council Resolution No. 68 75-CR, which was passed on June 5, 1975, to support the proposal for funding.

become an independently accredited community college rather than a satellite center of an off-reservation college. The name of the institution became a symbol of this consensus.[29]

In spite of the confusion over the name, the institution itself was off to a good start once adequate funding had been secured. The Center's first director, Ellsworth A. LeBeau, realized that the challenge described in the tribal charter was "monumental," but he and three other new staff members were full committed to implementing it.[30]

Although theirs was the smallest staff of any tribally controlled community college, the Center was able to organize a schedule for the fall semester of 1975 and to begin the complex task of consolidating the piecemeal course offerings into a coherent curriculum. Lack of an adequate number of full-time instructors forced the Center to rely heavily upon adjunct instructors which compounded the difficulties of scheduling. The first semester, however, was successful with

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[29]C.R.C.C. Board of Directors, Minutes, February 17, 1976, C.R.C.C. Administrative Records, Eagle Butte, South Dakota. After some delay, this confirmation of "Cheyenne River Community College" as the official name was made by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council as Resolution No. 92-77-CR which passed by a vote of fourteen to zero on June 9, 1977. C.R.S.T. Council, Secretary, Eagle Butte, South Dakota.

[30]Letter, LeBeau to Gipp, February, 27, 1976. In addition to LeBeau as Director, the original staff included Michael Claymore as Financial Aids/Academic Counselor/Recruiter/Admissions person, Sylvan C. Brown as Lakota Language Instructor and Carole O'Neal as Center Secretary.

eighty-four students enrolling in eight classes. Six were conducted in Eagle Butte and two conducted in Cherry Creek forty-four miles southwest.[31]

Enrollments increased to over one-hundred for the fall semester of 1976 and the spring semester of 1977. An interruption in funding made it impossible to retain a full-time staff or offer any classes during the summer and fall of 1977, but the the board remained active and the program was reorganized during November and December of 1977. This coincided with one of the worst winters in recent South Dakota history.

Initial enrollments during the spring semester of 1978 exceeded expectations. Over two-hundred individuals enrolled for more than thirty courses which were scheduled in Eagle Butte, Cherry Creek, Red Scaffold, Thunder Butte, Dupree, White Horse, Swift Bird and Timber Lake. This seemed to be a result of both pent-up demand and a positive reaction to the concept of a community college. By this time, the institution's advertising and scheduling were all done under the name of the Cheyenne River Community College.[32]

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[31] LeBeau, "Survey," p. 25.

[32] C.R.C.C. Administrative Records, Monthly Reports. The enrollments leveled off following the spring semester of 1978 to about one-hundred-forty to one-hundred-fifty individuals per semester during the fall and spring semesters. Summer classes were scheduled, but enrollments were much lower seldom exceeding forty individuals.

It should be noted that new presidents were appointed for both Presentation College (Sister Lynn Marie Welbig) and Nothern State College (Dr. Joseph M. McFadden) at about the same time C.R.C.C. was being reorganized. Both individuals were sympathetic to the aspirations of the C.R.C.C. Board of Directors and both provided much valuable cooperation and advice.

The heavy reliance on adjunct instructors continued to frustrate plans for expansion and refinement of the curriculum. The staff remained the same size and CRCC continued to offer courses in four to six reservation communities every semester to avoid an undue concentration of services in Eagle Butte. Following the example of Sinte Gleska and some of the other A.I.H.E.C. colleges, C.R.C.C. developed articles of incorporation which were approved by the South Dakota Secretary of State on August 14, 1978. The articles of incorporation were adapted from the original tribal charter issued in 1973.[33]

Recognition of C.R.C.C.'s status as a non-profit educational corporation was needed to apply for tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service. This developed into a lengthy project, but C.R.C.C. received tax exempt status on July 13, 1979.[34] Incorporation and tax exemption were important accomplishments which were essential if C.R.C.C. was to grow into an independently accredited institution.

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[33] C.R.C.C. Administrative Records, Articles of Incorporation. The articles described C.R.C.C. as "a non-profit South Dakota Corporation under S.D.C.L. 47-22," and defined its purpose as "conduct /of/ a tribally-controlled community college ... within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954."

[34] C.R.C.C. Administrative Records, "N-33 Program," Letter from C.D. Switzer, (I.R.S. District Director), July 13, 1979. C.R.C.C.'s Employer Identification Number was designated as 46-0351565. The N-33 Program was developed in response to an I.R.S. requirement for "a numerical schedule showing the projected racial composition for the student body, faculty and administrative staff."

Unmet needs still existed. The library needed expansion and improvement and the administrative offices were inadequate. Additional classroom space and full-time instructors were needed and additional efforts to improve student services and to preserve the heritage and culture of the reservation were also needed. Meeting these needs would require additional funding and A.I.H.E.C.'s efforts to secure passage of the "Tribally Controlled Community College Assistance Act" (Public Law 95-471) seemed to offer the best hope for the needed funding.[35]

C.R.C.C. moved to a modern, new building provided by the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe during January, 1980. The fall semester of 1980 saw the addition of the long-awaited nursing program in cooperation with Presentation College and the addition of a new, four-year teacher training program in cooperation with Black Hills State College.[36]

Much progress has been made toward the needed expansion of C.R.C.C.'s funding base. Accreditation is also a top priority which would facilitate funding under Public Law 95-471.[37] Independent accreditation would not only be

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[35] C.R.C.C. Administrative Records, "Plan of Operation," March 24, 1978. On Public Law 95-471, see Kurt Blue Dog, "A Legal Position Paper On Indian Education," report to the National Advisory Council on Indian Education, Boulder, Colorado, July 10, 1979, p. 27.

[36] C.R.C.C., Administrative Records, Monthly Reports.

[37] The general procedure followed by C.R.C.C. was outlined by Joseph J. Semrow, "The Uses of Accreditation," Unpublished Paper Prepared for the Higher Education Forum at the University of Arizona in 1977, Revised November 15, 1978.

consistent with C.R.C.C.'s original tribal charter, but it is critical if "quality education programs for the students" are to be maintained.[31]

Cheyenne River Community College has already made a number of valuable contributions to the community it serves. With the continuing commitment and cooperation of the board, staff, students, tribal officials and residents of the reservation, C.R.C.C. should be able to improve its many efforts in behalf of the four W's.

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[31]Letter, Francine Garreau, August 6, 1980, C.R.C.C. Correspondence file. Ms. Garreau, now Mrs. Robert Hall, was chairman of the Board of Directors at the time of this statement which summarized the College's commitment to quality education.

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